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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 004261

SIPDIS

STATE FOR S/I, AND NEA/ARPI, NEA/I, NEA/PPD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2010
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: MINSTATE FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOSTING PROMINENT IRAQIS

REF: ABU DHABI 4200

Classified By: MARTIN R. QUINN, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, A.I., REASONS 1.4 (B)
) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed (HbZ) is making good on his October 2 promise to U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad to urge prominent Iraqi Sunni Arabs to engage positively on the draft constitution. The former leader of the Sunni Waqf (Endowment), Adnan al-Dulaimi, was in the UAE last week. The meeting with al-Dulaimi was "very positive," HbZ's chief aide, Sultan al-Romeithi, told Pol Chief. Al-Dulaimi "took the message very well," he added. Al-Dulaimi reportedly pledged to use all his power to influence Sunni Arabs in Iraq. Current Sunni Waqf leader, Ahmed al-Ghaffour al-Samarrai, met with HbZ October 6, and Iraq's parliament speaker, Hajim al-Hassani, a Sunni Arab, met HbZ October 7. Both of those meetings reportedly were productive, al-Romeithi said. The official news agency reported simply that HbZ and al-Hassani "explored avenues of cooperation and bilateral relations and ways to boost them." (Note: While Ambassador Khalilzad's visit received press coverage, the press did not mention that HbZ had promised to invite Sunni Arabs to the UAE. End note.)

¶2. (C) Ambassador Khalilzad visited Abu Dhabi October 2 to urge HbZ and the UAE to support the Iraqi political process (reftel). HbZ had also agreed that the UAEG would encourage Dubai-based Iraqi Sunni cleric Ahmed al-Kubaysi to issue a positive statement. Al-Romeithi told there had not been any developments related to al-Kubaysi. HbZ had also suggested that television stations such as Abu Dhabi TV and al-Arabiya could broadcast statements of support for the Iraqi political process to the Arab street. Al-Romeithi reported that HbZ

had had a discussion about this with his brother Abdallah, the Minister of Information, but al-Romeithi did not know if, or when, there would be a message broadcast on one or both stations. Abu Dhabi TV, al-Arabiya, and Dubai TV have broadcast video clips from the Iraqi Government in recent days encouraging Iraqis to participate in the October 15 constitutional referendum.

Iraqi Expatriates Shut Out of Constitutional Referendum

¶3. (C) On October 10, Pol Chief asked Talib Khan, the chairman of the Iraqi Business Council of Abu Dhabi, about the political sentiments among the estimated 50,000 Iraqi expatriates in the UAE. Khan said they ran the gamut. "Some on our board are for, and some are against. In general, people here think the process should go forward. I would estimate that 20 percent (of Iraqi expatriates) are against the process for one reason or another." Those reasons vary from fear of Shi'a dominance to concerns about federalism, he said.

¶4. (C) The Iraqi Government's decision not to allow Iraqi resident abroad to participate in the October 15 referendum has reduced Iraqis residing in the UAE to the status of spectator, but they will be allowed to vote for 45 of the 275 seats in the parliament during the December 15 elections. Abu Dhabi residents Laith Gabriel and Nabil al-Taweel, both Iraqis, told Pol Chief they had not seen copies of the constitution and had been told by the Iraqi Embassy that copies were not available there either. Although al-Taweel knows he's not going to be allowed to vote October 15, he said it would still be helpful to read the document. He said that friends and relatives in Iraq were "getting sarcastic about voting on a constitution they haven't seen." Unlike the January 2005 election for overseas Iraqis, which was funded and organized by the International Organization for Migration with the support of the UAEG, the December 15 elections will be handled by the Iraqi Embassy in Abu Dhabi with the help of the Iraqi Business Council. Expatriates from 20-22 countries are expected to vote in the UAE at that time, Khan said.

Comment:

¶5. (C) As the October 15 referendum draws nearer, HbZ may get fewer visitors from Iraq because of travel restrictions the Government of Iraq is going to impose in the run-up to the vote. We are monitoring the airwaves for any statements that al-Kubaysi or others might make regarding the constitutional referendum specifically, and Iraq's political process generally.

QUINN